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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that a first, important, step toward a broadening of the skills of the educational planner is a clear conceptualization of some implications that accompany differing styles of decision-making. It has been suggested that planning traditionally employs a rational decision model that leaves the planner poorly equipped to deal with matters of organizational process and governmental politics. Planning, to be more effective, must now begin to proceed in depth into an analysis of, and the development of procedures related to, organizational processes and political bargaining. Each of the three decision models developed by Graham Allison has broad implications for the role of the educational planner. The planner must now begin to devote much time to the theoretical and methodological development of a planning orientation for the two models that have been largely ignored. (Author/IRT)

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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MODELS OF DECISION-MAKING

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The essence of educational planning is informed, goal-oriented, technologically controlled decision-making. As Guy Benveniste has pointed out in the October, 1974 issue of Educational Planning, the central assumption of the planning endeavor is rationalization.[1] Planners seek to define sets of goals, determine viable alternatives for the attainment of these goals, and offer some "best" or at least preferable ways to reach the goals--given limitations on the information that is available. The commonly accepted image of the educational planner is that of the highly purposive actor who, in the midst of constraint, is able to structure problems of choice.

Practicing educational planners are, of course, well aware of limitations which accompany these assumptions of rationality. Benveniste has called our attention to the "unforeseen consequences" which arise when educational planing "encounters the system we call organization or bureaucracy."[2] Organizational interests and the peculiar reward structures and traditions of the bureaucracy are powerful inhibitors upon the most rational of plans. No less pervasive is the politics of it all. Educational planners, and all other planners, constantly face the indeterminacy and unpredictability which accompanies the need to bargain, to negotiate and compromise, if idea is to become reality.

Although conceptually and methodologically tied to rational models of behavior, educational planners realize full well that their endeavors often directly confront styles of decision-making which proceed from other basic premises. As planning begins to mix with policy, as the educational planner begins to deal with the practical problems of implementation, it becomes apparent that assumptions of rationality are no longer adequate foci in themselves for the development of educational planning theory. Decisions often proceed from ill-defined goals, policy alternatives are frequently ignored, obviously superior choices may be displaced by "acceptable" decisions, well-designed data analyses are often lost sight of in favor of organizational traditions.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate these constraints upon the traditional planning approach by suggesting that rationality is just one of three important models worth consideration as basic to educational planning. Two others are: (a) An organizational process model and (b) a governmental politics model. A comparison of the implications of these three models, it should be noted, was first suggested by Graham T. Allison in a book (Essence of Decision) which is rapidly becoming a "classic" in the literature on policy formation.[3] Each model, including the rational, is developed briefly below. It is the intent of the discussion to suggest that each model brings its own, separate understanding to the process of educational planning and that all three models must be accounted for in the development of an effective planning discipline.

Educational Planning: The Rational Model

Assumptions of rational action have, of course, long been at the core of planning methodology. The development and implementation of operations research, system analysis, program budgeting, management information systems, management "games," and the like usually depend upon purposeful behavior, a sifting of information, and value-maximizing choice. Central to the appeal of the rational approach is the relative ease with which its processes are applied to structuring and quantifying choice situations. Models of choice may be developed which permit explicit comparisons of the utilities associated with policy alternatives. Decisions may be made from foundations of knowledge--from a clear understanding that the properties which characterize alternative futures are being appropriately subjected to careful scrutiny and analysis.

In its "classical" formulation, the methodology of rational planning is simple. There must first be some notion of definable goals--visions of the future, which are best stated as specific policy preferences and hopefully translated into measurable outcomes. Some alternatives are then identified. These are ranges of choice, differing courses of action which may lead variously to defined goals. To each of the alternatives there should be attached a set of consequences--a conceptualization of the variations in societal outcome which might occur as policy decisions are made. Finally, there is choice. A policy alternative is selected which will maximize, to whatever extent possible, the stipulated goals and the policy

preferences which accompany them.[4]

This model of "classic" rationality has, of course, been seriously challenged. It has been argued that, at best, the decision process can lay claim to only "limited" rationality. Because there are major constraints upon the capacity of planning methodologies to examine all conceivable policy alternatives or to properly measure all valued outputs, and because there is always a serious limitation upon the amount of information which can be made available, policy-makers are prone to "satisfice" rather than 'maximize."[5] A viable solution, a "good enough" policy alternative, will usually be decided upon rather than the optimal choice called for by the rational model.

A further and deeper criticism is that the neat logic of rationality fails to represent adequately the not-so-neat processes of policy-making in the "real" world. Critics are fond of pointing out that few decisions conform to the rationality assumed by planning processes. More importantly, it is often claimed that the planning approach, where it is successfully applied,.can have significant dysfunctional consequences. Decisions based upon narrow ranges of easy-to-measure values may ignore qualitative issues of critical importance. An attempt to measure faculty productivity by looking at the time it takes academic departments to admit and to graduate their students may encourage instructors to accept lower quality work and to push their students on to successful completion.[6] Efforts to project future demand and supply conditions in various teaching fields may lead to an overflow of teachers in previously "safe" areas.

The rational planning approach is finally criticized further for its emphasis upon "good" or "efficient" decisions to the neglect of the kinds of decisions which might satisfactorily adjust conflicting values. With its attempts to specify policy goals and to examine alternative courses of action in terms of preferable ways to meet the goals, the rational planning method places a premium upon a substitution of analysis for compromise and conflict. Decisions based upon "good" planning criteria, however, may leave unsatisfied, may ignore, or may alienate politically important segments of opinion and behavior. A "good" planning approach may preferably be one which offers a bit of compromise and offers frequent opportunities to muddle through. As Guy Benveniste similarly suggests, a good planning decision may also be one which discourages the development of an elitism which is appearing in the shift of policy-making from "the legally representative and accountable legislative branches of government to the executive or to non-accountable corporate, lobby or other informal groups."[7]

Planning theorists are certainly fully aware of such criticisms of these, and there has been much discussion of methodologies which would mitigate some of the major evils of the traditionally rational approach. It is now frequently argued that effective planning necessitates a recognition of politics and that a synthesis of some kind between the "classic" rationality of the planner and the "bounded" rationality of political analysis is necessary to an improvement of the policy-making process.[8] The models and technologies of planning, it is realized, must somehow be merged with our knowledge of compromise and the

use of power to create a "real-world" conceptualization of the planning process--one which fully acknowledges the impact of the socio-political environment in any design of educational futures.[9]

But despite its limitations (its boundedness and its blindness), the concept of rationality remains a very important and viable assumption in planning theory. The educational planner should continue to be guided by a methodology which calls for selecting goals and for choosing a best, or at least a preferred, way to reach these goals. Faced with severe technological and informational difficulties, he should still seek to pursue rationality to the extent possible--consistently structuring and guiding educational policy according to commonly shared objectives, given limitations on the knowledge and/or information that is available to him. Faced with competing values and policy preferences, the rationally-oriented educational planner should continue to place great stress upon alternatives--upon the delineation of differing choice possibilities and the determination of the potential consequences which surround future policy decisions. In addition, in his bag of tools, however, the educational planner should be cognizant of, and be able to utilize, models of decision making which proceed from other basic premises. One of the most important of these may the model Graham Allison terms the "organizational process."

Educational Planning: The Organizational Process Model

It is becoming increasingly recognized that effective planning has to allow for the fact that people work in, and planning usually takes place within the context of, large formal organizations. The finely tuned models and "systems" of the planning discipline are thus subject to the byzantine formalities and the arcane informalities which have come to characterize our work-a-day world. The planning process must somehow accept the fact that "red-tape," intra-organizational jealousies, fragmented authority structures, and out-of-date reward systems all very typically accompany the job of the planner and unless successfully integrated into planning will render rather useless the most sophisticated of decision models.

Under assumptions of rationality in planning, definable goals are maximized to the extent possible by purposeful actors systematically analyzing decision alternatives and consequences. Educational policy is a resultant of goal-directed, information-guided behavior. However, from another perspective, the perspective of an organizational process model, educational policies may be more properly thought of as outputs of complex, formal organizations. In this, the educational planning process is guided less by the maximization of definable goals than it is by the way organizations do things. Policies which are pursued are a function of such characteristics as organizational routines, matters of organizational "health," the norms and values of organizational actors, the programmatic repertoire of the organization, and problems of organizational control.[10]

To perform their complex activities, for example, organizations must coordinate the behavior of large numbers of individuals. Coordination

requires routinization, through the development of a code of standard operating procedures (SOP's). As Allison puts it: "Organizations perform their 'higher' functions, such as, attending to problem areas, monitoring information, and preparing budgets, producing reports, and developing hardware. Reliable performance of these tasks requires standard operating procedures (SOP's)."[11] These procedures, because they are "standard," frequently become closely tied to the reward structure of the organization; they become part of an integrated collection of organizational interests and are difficult to change.

Paramount among the various "interests" of an organization, of course, is the matter of overall health. As Banfield shows us, organizations are severely constrained by their maintenance and enhancement needs.[12] Organizational actors will be rewarded for decisions which increase the apparent "life chances" of their organization; they will be punished for actions which don't. Similarly, actors will be rewarded and accepted if they share and act upon prevailing organizational norms, if they work within the repertoire of programs the organization has available, and if they are willing to function within the established lines of organizational authority. In educational organizations, for example, actors are likely to share common professional values based upon similarities of training and experience, they are likely to work within commonly understood parameters of understanding about the nature of the school program and how educational services should be provided, and they are likely to have common perceptions regarding proper degrees

of power which accrue to the respective roles of teacher, principal, student, superintendent, parent, etc.

In short, all of these constraints (SOP's, interests, norms, program repertoires, matters of control) operate to guide and limit the alternatives available to policy-makers. As educational planners seek to define and evaluate opportunities for change, they must realize that their suggestions are going to be considerably affected by the organizational context--that plans will be shaped and interpreted through a screen of organizational objectives, roles, and interests which may be far removed from the neat rationality of classic planning theory. While it is by no means suggested that the planner should "buy" the prevailing norms of his organization or succumb to tangles of red-tape and bureaucratic machination, it is suggested that a better knowledge of the organizational process can be of enormous benefit to the educational planning discipline.

Perhaps a good example of organizational process may be gleaned from David Rogers' description of school desegregation efforts in New York City.[13] As Rogers notes, some of the most advanced policy statements ever written on school desegregation anywhere in the nation during the 1950's and 1960's came from New York City's Board of Education. The policies recommended were basic changes, not diversionary tactics designed to smother an issue. Involved were suggestions for school pairings, educational "parks," fundamental changes in school site selection and

construction so that schools would be built in "fringe" areas, changes in attendance boundaries, and of course, some busing. "Yet, in more than twelve years of such policy statements," wrote Rogers in 1968, "there has been little implementation."[14] The gap between the advanced policy statements and their implementation, claimed Rogers, can be best explained by examining the highly fragmented politics of New York City and the "pathological" nature of its school bureaucracy.

Rogers' evidence, however, suggests that the New York City School System was not as much a "sick" bureaucracy as simply a large organization functioning very typically according to its norms, its reward system, its program repertoires, and its standard operating procedures. A voluntary, open enrollment plan was proclaimed as board policy in 1960; and the school system's top headquarters staff worked hard to make it work. Elaborate instructions were sent to principals, teachers, and other field administrators to ensure compliance with plan directives. The open enrollment strategy failed to engender much desegration, however, largely because the detailed instructions never reached parents, telling them what schools their children might attend and how they might get there. Many parents throughout the city whose children were elibible for transfer never knew about it. For the most part, school principals and teachers who were depended upon to communicate with parents did a poor job of it. What the top administrators failed to recognize was that the reward system of the organization encouraged poor communication. Prinicipals from sending schools feared that large numbers of pupil transfers might

reflect adversely upon the quality of their schools or might indicate considerable parent dissatisfaction with the way the school is administered. Both teachers and principals were also reluctant to see any of the "better achievers" in their ghetto schools leave, feeling understandably that such children, although likely to want to transfer, should remain to inspire others.[15]

Another desegregation policy, in 1964, called for changes in the city's school construction procedures. Two major changes were: fringe-area construction, and a redesigning of junior high and high schools. Fringe-area construction meant new schools would be built on the borders of white and black residential areas--in hope that these schools would help to stabilize changing neighborhoods. The redesigning of schools policy called for complexes of four-year comprehensive high schools and four-year middle schools--which would draw upon larger, more heterogeneous populations than the existing three year "academic" and "technical" high schools and the three year junior high schools. Again, however, important elements of the organizational process were not addressed. First, the fringe-area construction plan failed to recognize the powerful hold that existing site-selection procedures had upon the school district staff. New York had a sizable office of school site and facilities planning. Over long experience this office had developed criteria for the location of schools which depended heavily upon population statistics--mainly, where in the city there were crowded vs. empty classroom conditions. New schools went where the crowds were. The question of racial stability had never been a component

in site planning and existing standard operating procedures, well developed, and long operable, would have had to have been changed drastically to fit the new policy. The old rules prevailed and schools continued to be built away from fringe areas, toward the center of ghetto or white communities.[16]

Second, the redesigning of schools idea failed to recognize the powerful organizational rewards which accompanied existing structures. New York's high school division, for example, was a strong administrative unit. Some of its academic high schools had achieved national repute, though justly criticized for their ethnic and class segregation. Some of the vocational high schools similarly had excellent reputations. To become comprehensive high schools would mean the loss of the selectivity which these schools had depended upon. For the junior high school division, redesigning would be just as calamitous--for junior high school teachers wanted acceptance as secondary school teachers, not elementary. The middle school idea would require them to give up their ninth grades to the high school and accept sixth graders--definitely a loss of status. Amidst such status anxieties and internal political rivalries, it became very difficult for the school system to consider the redesigning of facilities very seriously. Staff debated for three years whether the new "middle" schools should include three grades or four. Three more years were given to a discussion of the optimum size for middle schools. In the end, nothing was done.[17]

In sum, the Rogers example warns us that educational planning and

policy is heavily dependent for its effectiveness upon factors of organizational structure which respond very slowly to matters of planning "rationality." The planning process, particularly in its relationships with policy implementation or administration, must be able to adapt to an organizational process in education which is as yet, unfortunately, infrequently recognized and very poorly understood.

Educational Planning: The Politics Model

While the rational approach views educational planning and policy within a rather controlled, goal-oriented framework, and the organizational process model ties planning to the ongoing outputs of organizational behavior, a governmental politics model sees planning as an outcome of groups and interests involved in a power relationship. In this, the educational planning process is wrapped in a contest between competing goals rather than shaped within a rationally asserted rubric of unitary objectives or an organizationally determined context of maintenance and enhancement needs. Policies which are pursued are a function of the pulling and hauling, the give-and-take, that is politics. Interests differ, viewpoints are in conflict, power is shared, and the ability to exercise influence is variously distributed. Groups committed to one course of action seek to triumph over groups seeking other policy alternatives. Because each group has power, has some degree of ability to influence the course of action, the effect of different groups pulling differently often produces an outcome not wholly intended by any one policy actor--in effect, a compromise.[18]

Planning and policymaking within the "politics" model is a process of conflict and concensus building. The planner must be willing to bargain and to compromise and must be willing to tolerate the ambiguity, the "muddling through," which typically characterizes the political process. The planner must realize that some interests, some policy preferences, are going to have more influence over the outcome of the bargaining "game" than others. If he (as planners frequently do) views his role as an expressor of the larger, "public" interest (in some degree of opposition to powerful, private interests), then the planner must include in his calculations some "trade-offs," some transitional stages of policy change, and/or some advocacy procedures for transferring greater power to interests which are not well represented. In short, just as the planner must be cognizant of his organizational mileau, he must also recognize himself as just one among a number of participants in a political context.

As the 1960's neared an end, the members of a higher education planing and coordination unit, in one of the midwestern states, prepared detailed projections of college and university enrollments in the state for the 1970's and 1980's. The enrollment figures were presented at a meeting of an "advisory council" of higher education representatives before being released publicly and provided to the state legislature. The projections showed major alterations in the heretofore rapid growth of undergraduate enrollments and a shifting of growth between the community college and four-year sectors. Although alternative projections were outlined, based upon differing sets of assumptions, it was clear in

the report that state officials generally envisioned an enrollment picture for the 1970's which was at some variance with institutional visions of future growth opportunities. The institutional representatives present at the advisory council meeting were upset about the projections and criticized the planners for the damage the data might do to the higher education cause in the state legislature. The planning and coordination unit was asked to revise its enrollment figures considerably upward.

This, the planners did not do. The text of the enrollment report was much enlarged, however, before public distribution. With the assistance of the higher education institutions, language was developed and recommendations were added which argued for the maintenance of college and university resources despite a potential leveling off in enrollment and argued for allocations of dollars which would permit the institutions to explore new directions in program and service for "untapped" student populations. In short, the state planning staff was willing to negotiate a compromise which accomplished two important political objectives. The planning and coordination unit maintained a necessary credibility with the state legislature for the development of "good" information; however, it also maintained a necessarily close relationship with its politically powerful clients, the state's higher education institutions. While the planners could be accused of "selling themselves" a bit by tempering the enrollment projections with a plea for more higher education dollars, the revised report could also be labeled an example of good, politically astute planning--an example of a willingness to combine the rational process of planning with knowledge

of how one moves best within a very political environment.

Conclusion

There have been many suggestions that planners should cooperate more closely with, or at least be more sympathetic towards, those persons and processes which are involved in the politics and organizational dynamics of policy formation. Despite such urgings, there have been few practical suggestions which can guide planners in their jobs. This paper has suggested that a first, important step towards a broadening of the skills of the educational planner is a clear conceptualization of some implications which accompany differing styles of decision-making. It has been suggested that planning traditionally employs a rational decision model which leaves the planner poorly equipped to deal with matters of organizational process and governmental politics. Planning, to be more effective, must now begin to proceed in depth into an analysis of, and the development of procedures related to, organizational processses and political bargaining. Each of the three decision models developed by Graham Allison has broad implications for the role of the educational planner, and the planner must now begin to devote much time to the theoretical and methodological development of a planning orientation for the two models which have been largely ignored.

REFERENCES

1. See Guy Benveniste, "Consequences of Excessive Educational Planning," Educational Planning, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October, 1974), pp. 1-8.

2. Ibid., p. 1. The unforeseen consequences concerning Benveniste are the possible dysfunctional effects of rational educational planning upon organizational operations--particularly, possibilities of goal displacement, a loss of "professional" discretion, and a shift of decision-making away from legislative or other governing bodies.

3. See Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971. A special word should also be said for the work of Paul E. Peterson and Thomas Williams who are applying the Allison framework to education in their forthcoming book on school politics in Chicago. Peterson and Williams have presented an initial statement of their application of the Allison models to education in: "Models of Decision Making," State, School, and Politics, edited by Michael W. Kirst (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972), pp. 149-167.

4. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, pp. 30-31.

5. See Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior. New York: The Free Press, 1957, pp. 80-84.

6. See Benveniste, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

7. Ibid., p. 6.

8. See, David K. Wiles, "Politics and Planning: A Rationale for Synthesis in Educational Administration," Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 1, (Winter, 1974), pp. 44-56.

9. This concern is certainly well reflected in the decision of ISEP to focus its 1974 conference upon the politics of planning and to devote the entire issue of Educational Planning to papers from this conference in January, 1975.

10. See Allison, op. cit., pp. 67-96.

11. Ibid., p. 83

12. Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence. New York: The Free Press, 1961, pp. 263-285.

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14. Ibid., p. 15

15. Ibid., pp. 305-311.

16. Ibid., pp. 34 and 304.

17. Ibid., pp. 316-323.

18. See Allison, op. cit., pp. 144-147.